

Summary of Public Comments: Tuscobia State Trail Master Plan Variance, May 2017

The Tuscobia State Trail is located in Price, Sawyer, Washburn and Barron counties. This 74-mile trail on a former rail corridor is one of the longest rail trails in the state, running from Park Falls to the Wild Rivers State Trail just north of Rice Lake. The trail passes through part of the Flambeau River State Forest and the rugged wilderness of Wisconsin's Blue Hills. The trail connects seven communities in Barron, Washburn, Sawyer and Price counties, each providing year-round accommodations and services. The Price County section of the Tuscobia Trail (about 11 miles) is closed during the winter months to ATV/UTV use. This variance recommends expanding the months open for ATV/UTV use in Price County, consistent with adjacent Sawyer County to provide a seamless connector that is not currently available during the winter season to and from adjacent connecting trails, developed trailheads and links to important recreation support amenities in Park Falls (hotels, gas, food, entertainment, etc.).

A public comment period on this variance was open from April 20 to May 11, 2017. During that period the DNR received numerous comments from the public. Nineteen public comments were received via the variance public comment process. An additional 11 were received via the Recreation Opportunity Analysis process, during the variance public comment period. The comments are summarized below.

Emails: The DNR received a total of 18 emails on this topic. Fifteen were in favor, and three were against. Two of the three emails opposed to the change were from representatives of snowmobile clubs.

Letters: The DNR received one letter on this topic. The letter was from WATVA (Wisconsin ATV Association), in favor of the change.

Comment Cards: During the public comment period a public open house was held in Park Falls for the DNR's on-going Recreation Opportunity Analysis (ROA). Some people took advantage of that meeting to express their comments on the Tuscobia trail variance. Of the three "activity comment cards" received on this topic, all three were in favor of the opening of the trail to ATV use. Of the eight "property/place comment cards" received, one was in favor and seven were against the change.

Those opposed to the proposal mainly expressed concern that the ATV/UTVs would illegally use the three snowmobile trails that cross or connect to the Price County section of the Tuscobia State Trail. These connecting trails are on private property and the land owners have made it clear that they do not want ATVs using these trails. Snowmobilers expressed concern that the owners will close these trails out of frustration if there is illegal use by ATV users.

Next Steps: Based on comments received, the department intends to meet with stakeholder groups to better understand the underlying concerns related to ATV use on the Tuscobia State Trail. The department will report the outcome of any meetings and provide a final determination on the variance following further discussions.